

341.6
Sta

AMERICA'S POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORLD'S PEACE

BY

OSCAR S. STRAUS

Former Ambassador and member of the
Permanent Court of Arbitration
at the Hague

Publication No. 918

Reprinted from AMERICA'S INTERESTS AS AFFECTED BY THE EUROPEAN WAR
Vol. LX of THE ANNALS of the
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE
Philadelphia, July, 1915

Makers
Syracuse, N. Y.
PAT. JAN. 21, 1908

2-16
3-28
Vaup
20
Reprinted from **The Annals** of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Philadelphia, July, 1915.
Publication No. 918.

AMERICA'S POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORLD'S PEACE

BY OSCAR S. STRAUS,

Former Ambassador and member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration at the Hague.

Any discussion of America's possible contribution to the world's peace must at this time, in the nature of things, be purely speculative and hypothetical. Whether this war will end by the decided victory of the one side or the other, or whether it will be prolonged to a state of exhaustion, or whether, before such a state is reached and in recognition of the probability that such will be the result, the warring nations may come together by their representatives in conference to arrange for the conclusion of the war and for plans to secure by negotiation what they may have failed to secure at the cannon's mouth—these are questions surrounded with so much uncertainty at the present time that no one is justified in forming a definite conclusion.

President Wilson and his administration, animated by the high and noble desire to conserve the moral influence of our country as a mediator and peace-maker, have made and are making every effort to maintain not only a strict attitude of neutrality, but also a spirit of impartiality on the part of our people. To quote the President's words from his recent address to the members of the *Associated Press*:

Let us think of America before we think of Europe, in order that America may be fit to be Europe's friend when the day of tested friendship comes. The test of friendship is not now sympathy with the one side or the other, but getting ready to help both sides when the struggle is over.

And yet with all this effort on the part of our government, which has been consistently urged by the President and followed since the beginning of the war and sometimes in the face of severe provocation, our government's attitude has been misinterpreted, as is evidenced by the press not only in Germany but likewise in Great Britain and in the other belligerent countries. This misinterpretation, fault-finding and even reproof have been officially expressed in a

statement authoritatively given out a short time ago by the German ambassador, protesting against our not observing our neutral obligations. Utterances in some of the leading British papers would indicate that our attitude of neutrality likewise does not satisfy public opinion in that country.

I refer to these facts because the attitude and the disposition toward us of the belligerent nations will have a direct bearing upon what contribution we may be invited or permitted to make in aiding in the establishment of peace among the warring nations and in the development of plans for securing the permanent peace of the world.

There is yet another important consideration which we shall have to determine for ourselves before it will be possible for us to have a part or take a part in devising plans for the peace of the world. The American traditional policy has been expressed in two important state papers, in Washington's farewell address, and in President Monroe's message to Congress, which state papers have a prestige and authority second only to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. Washington, in his farewell address, stated that Europe had "a set of primary interests which to us have none or very remote relations." His thought was, that it was the course of wisdom so far as possible to disassociate America from the ordinary vicissitudes of European politics.

Monroe, in his message, amplified the Washington policy as the changed circumstances and the immediate necessities demanded, by reminding the powers of the Holy Alliance of our policy in regard to European nations, that we would not interfere in their internal concern, and that we would not regard their interference in the affairs of the government of the states on the American continent with indifference. This American policy in its double form was annexed to the signatures of the American delegates to the Hague convention, and was spread on the minutes of the conference, and as such recognized by the nations of the world.

The question, therefore, naturally arises: has America the right to demand participation in the conferences of the belligerent nations following the present war, for the purposes of arranging for the future peace of the world? Another question presents itself: even if we should not have the right, and in the event that we should

be invited by the belligerent nations as the leading neutral power to participate in such a conference, can we do so without impliedly, if not expressly, relinquishing our traditional attitude of exclusive control over purely American questions?

This contingency will bring to the foreground the consideration, if not the wisdom, of a further extension if not a reversing of the American traditional policy as outlined by Washington when he said:

The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is in extending our commercial relations to have with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop.

The question that would present itself, have not the world relations and the interdependent interests of nations since Washington's admonition was given, become so closely and intimately related so that our duty to other nations as well as our own "enlightened self-interests" make it imperative upon us not to "stop," but to unite with the nations of the world in such a policy, be it by international agreement, by entering into a league with the leading nations of the world, or by becoming a member of a world federation, or by uniting in such a joint arrangement, as in the wisdom of nations may be determined upon as the most practical and effective for the establishment and maintenance of the peace of the world?

From generation to generation we have been making radical changes in our internal policies, and notably in the direction of the enlargement of the powers of the central government. The Interstate Commerce Laws and the Federal Reserve Act are themselves distinct evidences of those changes. A nation cannot remain stationary any more in its national than in its international relationship and policy. "New occasions teach new duties."

It is not improbable that the outgrowth of this war will affect the future policies not only of the belligerent nations but of neutral nations as well. Norman Angell says that if we do not mix in European affairs, Europe will mix in our affairs, and that the day of isolation for us, whether we like it or not, is over. He may be right. It is much easier for a country when it is small in population and in interests to remain aloof, than when it becomes one of the great powers of the world. Our country with its population of a hundred million and its expanded world commerce is too large a

factor to stand aloof from world questions. In the event of a league or confederation of the leading nations, for us to separate ourselves by refusing to assume our share of responsibility might conflict with our national interests and our international duties and have the result of placing ourselves in opposition to the world policies of the new world-state. In such an event, would it not be better for such a world-state as well as for ourselves to form a part of such a state and help to shape its policies as one of the important constituent members, than to conserve our traditional policies and stand aloof?

These are questions that not unlikely, I might say, very probably, will present themselves to the American government at the outcome of the present war or even before, in contributing its mediatory offices in bringing the war to a conclusion.

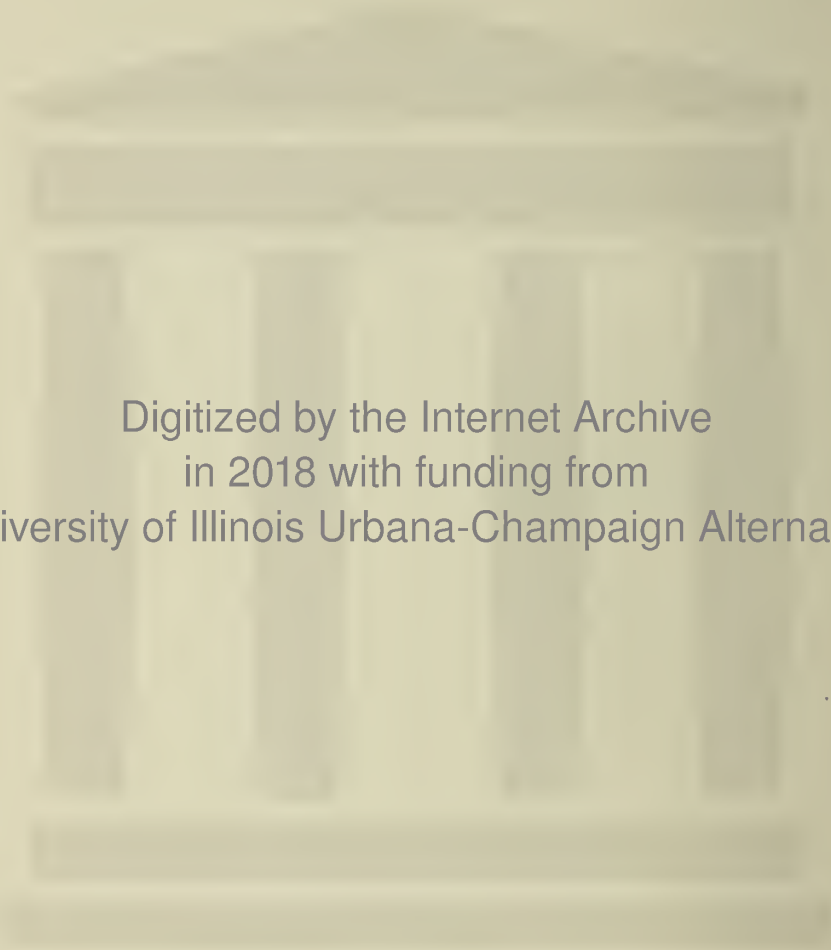
Our country has as deep a concern, not only morally, but economically and industrially, in the peace of the world as any one of the larger nations. A war such as this, or upon such a considerable scale, affects under the changed economic and commercial conditions and relationships of modern times the neutral nations only to a lesser degree than the nations actually at war. And, therefore, have we not the right and is it not our duty to coöperate to the fullest of our power in the perfection and the maintenance of a plan for the preservation of peace?

It is to be hoped that the extreme suffering and sacrifice that this war entails may have the compensation of developing supreme wisdom on the part of the nations. The nations of the world, to be at peace, must develop a broader patriotism as distinguished from a national jingoism, a more enlightened sense of justice which does not preach one gospel on one side of a national border and a different or opposite gospel on the other side. In other words, so long as the standards of national justice and international justice are not in consonance but on different levels, and in many respects directly opposed to one another, the security for peace must largely depend upon the doctrine of might. Until the international conscience is brought under the majesty of the law, there can be no permanent security for international peace.

Perhaps the most guiding and impressive contribution that America can make to the world's peace is the successful experiment and example of its federated union of forty-eight separate common-

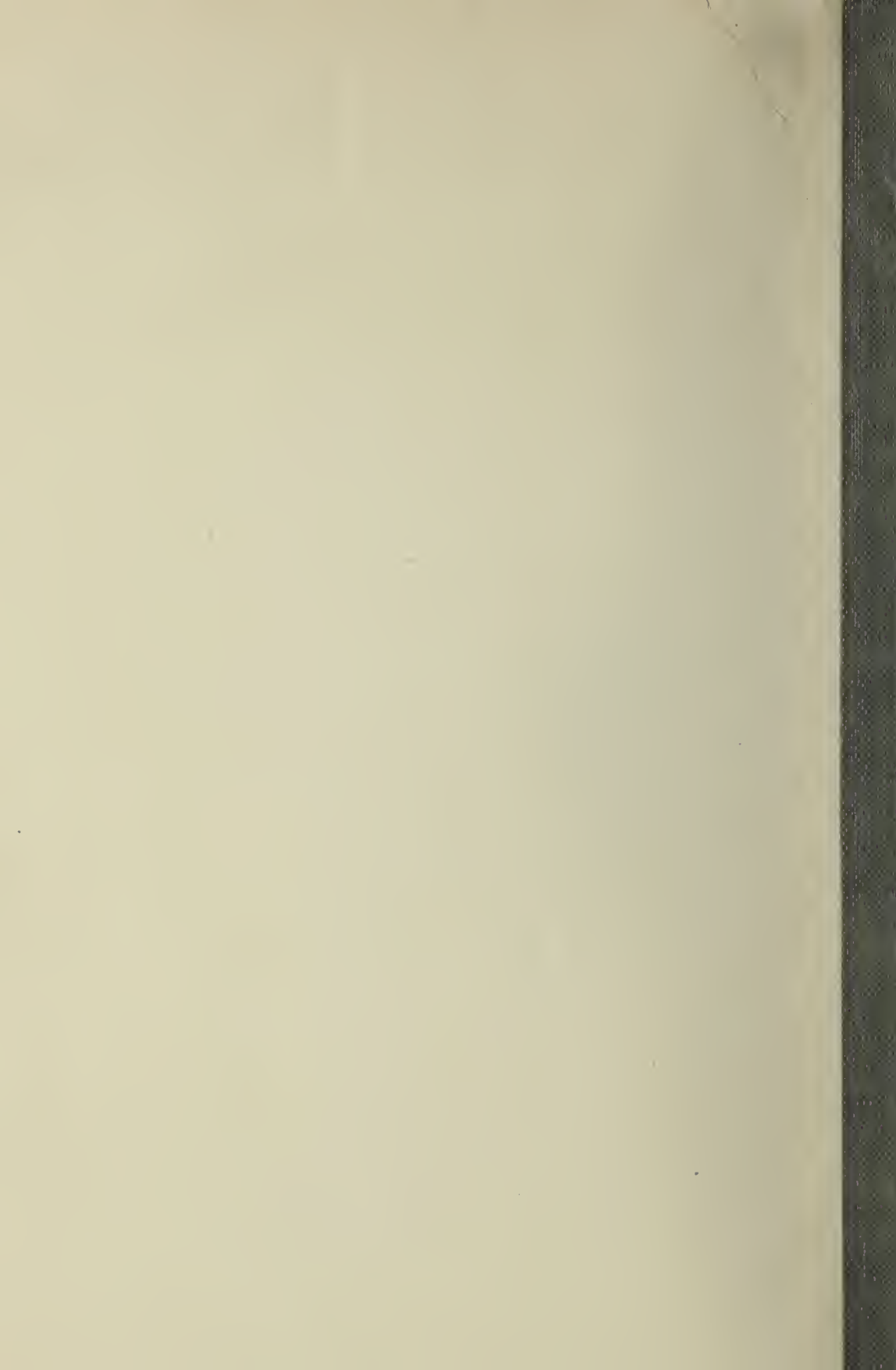
wealths, which affords to the world a striking illustration that its preservation is due to the fact that behind the *right* of each one of these commonwealths, the smallest as well as the largest, stands the united *might* of all. This greatest of all wars, involving directly nearly two-thirds of the population of the world, is a glaring and ghastly evidence that international relationship has to be reconstructed, that the plans heretofore devised, of nations standing alone or separating themselves into two or three great divisions under dual or triple alliances and ententes, have lamentably broken down, and instead of lessening the area and the horrors of war, have had the opposite result and drawn nations into war that otherwise would have remained at peace.

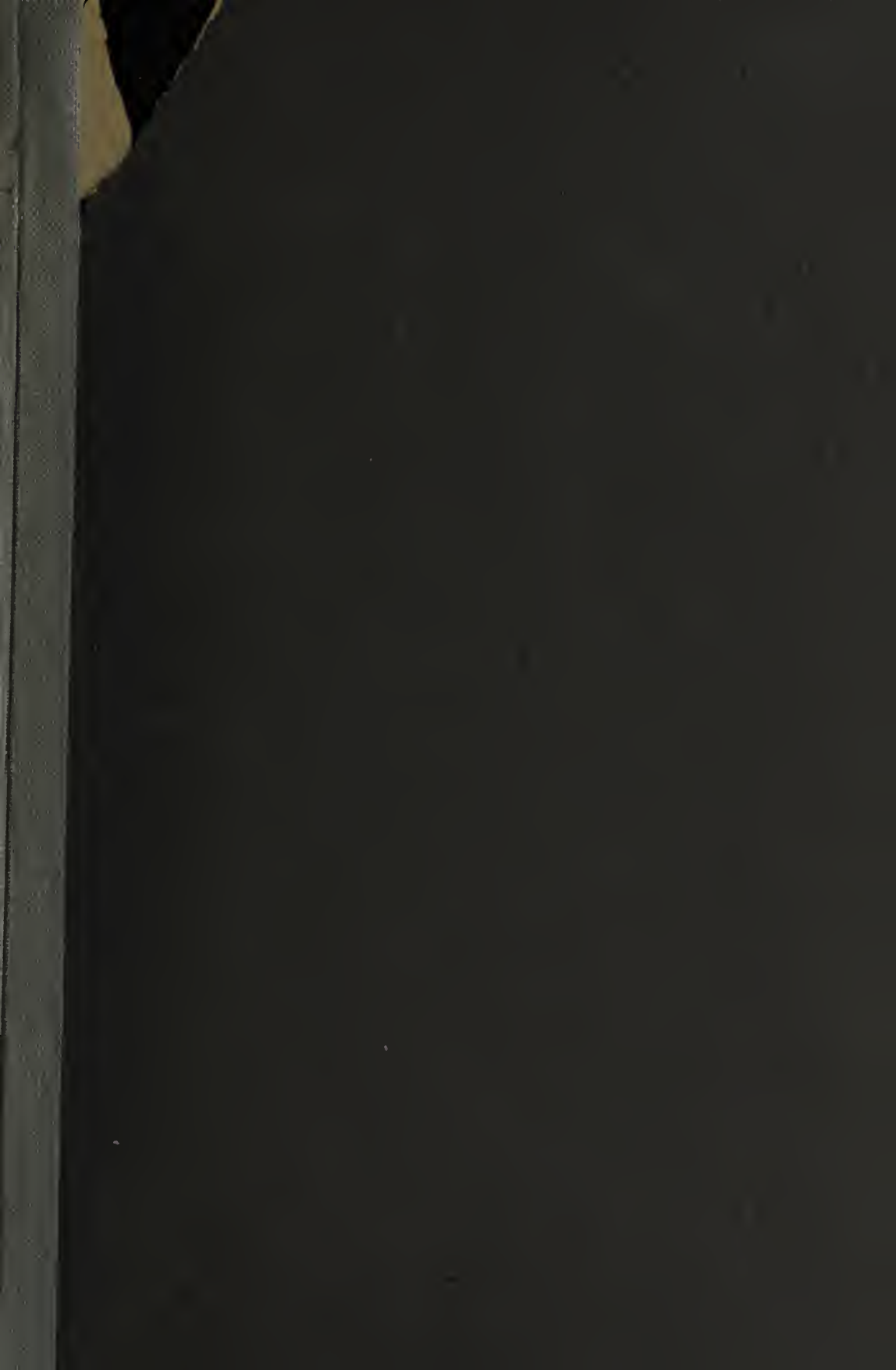
Therefore, the federation or league of all the states in the American union embodies the ideal, if not the plan, for a universal league or federation of the nations as the surest and safest guarantee for securing the permanent peace of the world. In such a federation power will be needed, not for aggression but to prevent aggression. Power will be needed, not to promote the selfish ends of individual nations but to curb them. Power will be needed, not for making war but for repressing war, for maintaining peace. Power will be needed, not for breaking treaties but for maintaining them; and this power must not be vested in *one*, but in *all* the nations.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2018 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Alternates

<https://archive.org/details/americaspossible00stra>





UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 059095338